

SISTER MARJORIE FLANAGAN
August 16, 1916 - October 17, 2006

It seems fitting as we gather to celebrate the life of Sister Marjorie Flanagan that we recall the words written by Sister Mary Schmidt for the Cantata which many of us have sung on several occasions.

*“Now gathers in the dusk and I am wearied out.
So long the day.
O dear eternity,
Dear end of pilgriming, at last I pray;
Show me the vesper star, the rising moon to brighten soon the way.
My home and rest art thou
Who set the wilderness abloom with love.
The children’s voices hushed;
From out the deep wood soars the homing dove;
In my Jerusalem
The shining gates are welcoming above.”*

Mary Ellen Margery Flanagan was born on August 16, 1916, in Brady’s Bend and baptized on the 27th of August in Saint Patrick’s Church, Brady’s Bend. She was one of six daughters and six sons born to Stella Stein and John Flanagan. On March 25, 1935, at the age of 19 she entered the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill.

It has been a long time since most of us can remember the active, attractive, neat young woman with a head of beautiful red hair and dancing eyes. We also need to think hard to remember Sister Placide, who was a beautiful seamstress and made so many perfect black caps. How will I ever get a cap made? Ask Placide, she is great.

In the early days of her community life Sister Marjorie was teased frequently by those close to her about her Brady’s Bend heritage and her most unfamiliar name. Are they ever going to straighten out Brady’s Bend? How do you spell that name PLASEED. Who is Plaseed? Marjorie was the youngest of four who entered together. (Sisters Alquin, Peter and Agatha). They always enjoyed the title they received from others who entered later when they were called the APA’s.



Sister Marjorie earned a bachelor’s degree in History and Psychology from Duquesne University and spent much of her ministerial life teaching in the elementary schools of Greensburg, Phoenix and Pittsburgh. She was described as a no nonsense teacher who tried to inspire in her students a love of reading and a desire for learning.

In 1972, she opened and supervised one of the first diocesan learning centers in Saint James School in Wilkinsburg. An article in the November 17, 1972 issue of the Pittsburgh Catholic captures her enthusiasm for this new venture. “Kids are different today. They are a TV generation. They don’t sit the way we did. You need things like this if you’re going to make education meaningful to them. The better students aren’t bored. They can move at their own pace. The slower student has the time needed to grasp his lessons. He can work till he understands without holding back the others and also without being flunked out.”

When not busy with her teaching assignments, Sister Marjorie enjoyed visits with her large and close family. She enjoyed traveling with them and was eager to share her family and their wonderful welcoming hospitality with other sisters who were her friends in community. Marjorie was also known to like to gamble a bit. I am told by Sister Zachary that she used to provide a number to be played on occasion. Peggy Daniels said the number hit a few times.

Marjorie's life since 1990, has been one of surrender to the Will of God. In one sense she has handed over much that she loved. Her eyes failed so that she could no longer devour the books which brought so much joy. Because of her failing eyesight and arthritic hands she could no longer sew and stitch as she had done so often. Her parents, five of her brothers Stephen, Vincent, Thomas, James Leo and a two-year old brother, who died before she entered, and four of her sisters, Eileen, Rose Marie, Kathleen and an infant sister had died. Soon unable to care for herself she needed to depend on others who, while caring and loving, did not have the sense of style or neatness that was her gift.

Sister Marjorie did not remember many things. Most of her community friends had gone before her and her memory was not as sharp as it once was. However, when asked if she wished to receive Holy Communion her response was always the same. Eyes opened and a sincere, yes. She recognized her friend in Jesus.

Last week we gathered here to bid farewell to one of Sister Marjorie's most faithful visitors. Even as Los was facing death herself she stopped to visit Marjorie and Marjorie responded to her most gratefully. Many of us think that this friendship which began in life will now be richer and fuller in the life they both now share.

Tuesday morning Marjorie slipped quickly into the life promised her so long ago. Her journey has not been an easy one, but her reward is great. Marjorie, may you enjoy this new life unencumbered by the pain, the loss and the limitations. Find your home and rest, "In our Jerusalem, the shining gates are welcoming above."

*Funeral Liturgy Reflections
Sister Louise Grundish
October 20, 2006*